DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 091 403 TM 003 612

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TITLE Proctoring Oral and Written Performance in a Motivation Course.
PUB DATE [74]
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS College Students; *Evaluation Techniques; Individualized Instruction; *Interviews; *Learning Motivation; Pacing; Proctoring; Serial Learning; *Tests; Writing Exercises

ABSTRACT

A comparison of oral interviewing and written proctoring procedures is described. Students were required to present units orally or in writing from unit study guides. Final exam scores were positively correlated with the number of oral interviews one student interviewer gave to another student, and negatively correlated with the number of proctored materials a student proctored. Self-paced performances differed for individuals. Implications drawn were that presenting oral interviews may be more effective for learning than presenting written material and that a student's learning may be further facilitated by his administering of oral interviews. (Author)

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Ferster (1968) first described the oral interviewing technique used in personalized instruction. With this procedure, students "studied" in the classroom period by orally reciting material which was later tested upon by written examination. Keller's (1968) procedure involved proctoring a student's performance on a written exam immediately following the completion of the exam. In both procedures, the student was informed of any errors or omissions immediately following the oral or written performance. If the student failed to show mastery of the material, he was simply asked to review the assignment and retake the interview or exam later. Although both techniques have been placed under the rubric "personalized instruction" the two differ procedurally as described above. In the literature, no distinction is usually made between the two procedures.

Difficulties sometimes arise in interpreting studies which have used personalized instruction because of this lack of distinction. Whether interviewing oral performance produces results different from those found from proctoring written performance has not yet been determined. Further, no studies have examined the effects of student's proctoring or interviewing other students within the framework of a personalized system of instruction. Recent studies have compared the effects of proctoring no, some, or all written exams (Farmer, Lachter, Blaustein, and Cole, 1972) and oral interviewing versus written exams non-proctored (Whitehurst, 1972).

Farmer, et al., however, did not observe oral performances nor was individual data furnished and Whitehurst graded written performances without proctoring. Whitehurst showed no differences between oral interviewing and written exam grading using weekly exam scores as the dependent variable.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate differences between the two techniques using final exam scores, student paced performances, and attitudinal reports as the dependent variables.

Method

Subjects

Twenty-one of 25 students who volunteered from an undergraduate class in "motivation" participated in this study.

Apparatus

Cofer's (1972) Motivation and Emotion was used as the basic text for the course. Study guides consisting of questions related to each of 9 units in the text, a multiple-choice final exam, and a questionnaire (modified from Born, 1970) were prepared by the experimenters for use in the course. All interviewing, proctoring, and final exams were taken in a classroom available 5 days weekly at the same hour. The term was completed within 10 weeks.

Procedure

Students in a class of about 50 were asked to design their own methods for completing the course in motivation. The procedures for a

personalized system of instruction were briefly outlined to the class. Students interested in participating in the course were asked to attend a more detailed summary of the procedures during the next class period. Twenty-five students participated in the initial meeting.

Students were asked to choose whether they preferred oral interviews or proctored written work. Of the original 25 students, 15 chose only written, 8 chose oral or written, and 2 chose only oral. After the instructions were given and the student's names obtained, students were dismissed and told to return on the following class day for the first study guide for the course. At the second meeting, the instructions were repeated, questions concerning the procedures were answered, study guides were distributed, and students were asked to return to begin their interviews as they felt ready for them.

The students elected to meet 5 days weekly; i.e., they elected to have interviewers available at the same time and place daily. The course was originally scheduled by the university for one hour, three days weekly for 3 quarter hours credit. Interviewers and proctors were selected by one of the experimenters as students were present to give them and as other students were ready to take them. Interviewing and proctoring were conducted by either experimenter or by students who had previously passed the unit. Few sessions consisted of more than 6 interactions between the student and an interviewer or proctor. Students who had passed and were taking oral interviews, interviewed others orally. Students who had passed and were proctored over written material, proctored the written work of others.

Oral interviews and written proctoring usually lasted less than 20 minutes over a single unit of material. No more than one unit was interviewed or proctored in a single session by one of the students. Students were allowed to take interviews or have written work proctored for only one unit in a session Oral interviewers listened to the speaker until the study guide questions were completed. The speaker was allowed to use notes if he desired, but reading from notes was discouraged. Interviewers were encouraged to use notes to insure less "drift" from the material over which the student was interviewed. Upon completion of the study guide, interviewers commented upon the material and asked the student to clarify any omissions or errors. Written proctoring was similarly conducted. Students brought the written work to the proctor and the answers were read. Upon completion of the reading, students were asked to clarify errors of commission or omission in writing. Corrections were usually made within the class session. Following oral interviews and written proctoring, each student was given a study guide set for the next unit if the interaction was satisfactory. If the interaction was not satisfactory, the student was asked to review the material and retake the interview or proctoring at a later date. All interactions were informally monitored.

Students were allowed to self-pace all study and interviewing behaviors. Final exams were given as soon as the student completed the 9 units and reported readiness for the exam. Students were asked to complete the course questionnaire at the time of the final exam.

Results

A comparison was made between the number of interviews given and the final exam scores for the oral interviewing procedures using Spearman's rank order correlation. The analysis showed a rho = .78 which was statistically significant ($p < .025$). An analysis of proctoring effects on proctors of written material using Spearman's rank order correlation showed a rho = -.65 which was also significant ($p < .05$). A further analysis of possible effects on students who took oral interviews or written proctoring from other students showed negative but nonsignificant results.

A comparison of final exam scores by the median test suggested no statistical difference between students under either oral or written performance requirements ($p < .20$). An examination of the data shown in Figure 1, however, suggests a real difference, although nonsignificant. No differences were seen between class standing or sex using a chi-square test.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Self-pacing has been a feature of interest in studies of personalized instruction. In this study, student self-pacing was characterized by five distinct patterns of performance. Under the oral interviewing procedures, one student showed positively accelerated performance, one showed negatively accelerated performance, three showed consistent and evenly paced performances, two showed early and high rate linear pacing, and three showed break-

and-run patterns. Students under the written proctoring procedures showed less variation for self-paced patterns. Six students showed positively accelerated performances, two showed negatively accelerated performances, and three showed evenly paced performances. No differences were seen in group performances, but the written group tended toward a steeper positively accelerated curve than did the oral group.

Attitudes toward the class procedures showed little difference between the two groups as one might expect from two procedures with quite close characteristics. One difference was that the oral group rated the class slightly more interesting than other classes taken during the term, while the written group rated the class slightly less interesting. Of both groups, 14 out of the 19 surveyed indicated that they would recommend a course of this type to their friends, 11 indicated that they would use a similar procedure for teaching classes of their own, and 14 rated the self-pacing characteristic as the feature most liked about the class. No aspects of the class were noted as disliked by many students except the text (7 out of 19). Oral students ranked learning at 5 on a 7-point scale (1 to 7, low to high) while written students ranked learning 3.7.

Discussion

Two members of the written group stated that they should have taken the oral procedure after the class was over. One of the original 12 of the written group changed into the oral group after the first written proctoring session. He stated that he was immediately aware of the

advantages of the oral interviewing procedures although they appeared to require more work. Students volunteering to appear in one group over another produced some difficulties in statistical interpretations due to the lack of random assignment. One advantage, however, is that the drop rate was much lower than the drop rate typically described in courses using similar procedures (Born, 1971). Only one student from both groups dropped after sampling the procedures. Whether this low drop rate can be attributed only to the volunteer status of the student is speculative and needs further analysis.

The basic comparison in the present study was that of the oral interview with the written proctoring procedures. Oral interviews consisted of face-to-face contact for about 20 minutes. Written proctoring consisted of minimal face-to-face contact for the same amount of time. Other variables were presumably held constant. The difference between group final exam scores, although nonsignificant, showed higher scores for most of the orally interviewed students. Positively accelerated interactions were not quite as pronounced for the orally interviewed group and attitude scores were slightly higher for the oral group.

The most important finding in this study was the positive correlation between the number of interviews given and final exam scores for the orally interviewed students; a similarly important finding was the negative correlation between the number of students proctored and proctor's final exam scores. Implications from these data suggest that the oral interviewing procedure may be the missing link in the teaching-learning problem

stressed by Dubin and Taveggia (1968). Face-to-face contact might be the essential commodity for personalized instruction as Ferster (1968) emphasized.

Footnotes

1. Appreciation is expressed to Dr. John Priollaud for allowing us to use volunteers from his class in this study. A briefer version of this paper was presented at the annual meetings of the American Psychological Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, August 1973 and published in the Proceedings, 81st Annual Convention, APA, 1973, 8, 915-916. Both authors are now at the Division of Education and Psychology, Minot State College, Minot, North Dakota 58701.

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Figure Caption

1. Final exam scores for orally interviewed and written proctored students.